

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco, California

April 3, 2013

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Well, first of all, I want to thank Tom and Kat for opening up this spectacular home. They were bragging about the view—[*laughter*—but Secret Service wasn't going to let me look at the view. But I'm now in my second term, so I can—[*laughter*—so I called an audible, and I went out there, and it is spectacular. And they were all apologetic. They said, well, you can't see the bridge. [*Laughter*] I said, it's okay, I can see the Pacific Ocean; that's pretty good. [*Laughter*] So I was perfectly satisfied with the view, and I could not be more grateful and thankful to them for hosting us here tonight. So give them a big round of applause.

I want to thank Brandi Carlile for singing the—there she is. Now, I just—the reason I know Brandi is because the White House Photographer, Pete Souza, was a fan of Brandi's before the rest of the world knew Brandi and followed her around everywhere. He didn't stalk her, he was just—[*laughter*—he was a fan. And so Pete Souza gets credit, before Jimmy Fallon or anybody else, for Brandi Carlile being discovered, at least by me. [*Laughter*] But we're so grateful for her participating here tonight.

The main reason we're here is actually not me. The main reason we're here is because we have got a fearless leader who happens to be your neighbor, who day in, day out is fighting the good fight on every single issue that matters in terms of making this a more equitable, more prosperous, more generous, more competitive nation. And she has been an extraordinary friend of mine, but more importantly, she's a friend to working families all across the country each and every day. I could not be prouder of her, and I expect that she is going to be once again the Speaker of the House—Nancy Pelosi. Love Nancy.

And Nancy wouldn't be—I think would be the first to say that she could not do what she does if it weren't for her extraordinary Members. Right now her chief rebounder, assist person, handyman—[*laughter*—the guy who is making this enormous effort work is Steve Israel. So we want to thank Congressman Steve Israel. And we've got three other Members here today. Mike Honda—where's Mike? There he is in the back. Jared Huffman. Jared is right there. And Eric Swalwell. There he is.

All right, now, first of all, Tom used that analogy, I think, 2 days after I went two for twenty at—[*laughter*—at the Easter egg roll, guarded by a number of 6-year-olds. [*Laughter*] So clearly, I have not been playing enough basketball for anybody to want to use that analogy. But what I think is absolutely true is that the way I have always thought about politics, I know the way Nancy thinks about politics, is that we are a team. And when I say we, I'm not simply referring to the people in Washington.

If you noticed, during my Inauguration Address and my State of the Union, I talked about citizenship; I talked about what it means to be a citizen. And the notion of citizenship is not simply a matter of voting, it's not simply a matter of writing a check to a candidate who you like. The notion of citizenship is that all of us have obligations to this Nation, to our fellow citizens, and to future generations, and that each and every day, we are tested and asked to participate in ways large and small to push that boulder up the hill a little bit and to make sure

that when our time here has passed, we can say, America is stronger, it's more prosperous, and opportunity is available to every single American.

That's not just my job, it's not just Nancy's job, it's your job as well. And the fact that all of you are here is an indicator that you take this notion of citizenship seriously. And because you do, Nancy and I, and Steve and others, we've had an opportunity over these last 4 years and a couple of months to make some extraordinary changes in this country.

We were able to yank an economy that was on the verge of a depression out of depression. And although we're not all the way back, the economy has stabilized, our financial markets have stabilized, housing is beginning to come back, and families are starting to feel a little more hopeful about their prospects for the future.

Because of you, because of our team, we have been able to assure that people who already have health insurance have better health insurance: that they've got preventive care; they've got contraceptive care; that insurance companies can't drop them for no good reason; that young people can stay on their parent's plan until they're 26. And by next year, we'll know that 35 million people, most of whom work, are never again going to have to say to themselves that because of a preexisting condition or simply a lack of money, that they end up bankrupt or end up in an emergency room when they or their family members get sick. That happened because of all of you.

Because of you, we were able to make sure that serving your country didn't depend on who you loved, and as a consequence of some of those changes, we're now starting to see an extraordinary transformation in our culture that assures that the LGBT community has full and equal citizenship in this country. That happened because of you.

Because of you, roads have been built that needed repair, and people were put back to work. Because of you, research has happened that is looking to cure everything from Alzheimer's to Parkinson's to juvenile diabetes. Because of you, we're actually seeing genuine improvement in our schools, and States all across the country—including very red States—have embarked on a reform agenda that makes certain that our kids can compete in this new global economy.

Because of you, millions of young people have health insurance—they have health insurance, but are also able to afford college and couldn't afford it before. And because of you, despite a very aggressive agenda on the other side to block action, we've been able to double fuel efficiency standards on cars. We've been able to take mercury out of our air. We have been able to reduce carbon emissions in this country and have made not only this a healthier place to live, but have also begun to address in a serious way one of the biggest challenges of our time, and that is the challenge of climate change. That all happened because of you.

But here is the thing: We've got a lot more work to do. That's why I ran for a second term. The plane is nice—[laughter]—but the truth is, is that being in the bubble drives me crazy. So if I didn't think I was actually going to get something done, I wouldn't have run.

Nancy has gorgeous grandchildren. And if it weren't for the fact that we have more work to do, I'm sure that she wouldn't be going after the Speakership again. The reason we do so, and the reason you're here, is because we know we can do so much more to make this country what it can be.

Now, over the next couple of months, we've got a couple of issues: gun control. I just came from Denver, where the issue of gun violence is something that has haunted families for way

too long, and it is possible for us to create commonsense gun safety measures that respect the traditions of gun ownership in this country and hunters and sportsmen, but also make sure that we don't have another 20 children in a classroom gunned down by a semiautomatic weapon, by a fully automatic weapon in that case, sadly.

Immigration reform is something that I believe that we can get done over the next couple of months. It's interesting how clarifying to the mind Democrats getting 70 percent of the Latino vote was in suggesting that maybe we needed to get—finally fix a broken immigration system and making sure that we're both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

But even if we're able to get those two things done—and I'm hopeful that we do over the next couple of months—we're going to have some big challenges. We still have to rebuild this country. We've got about \$2 trillion worth of deferred maintenance. We could be putting back to work Americans all across this country not just rebuilding roads and bridges, but building state-of-the-art schools and a smart grid that would make sure that we're wasting less energy and link cities that are using energy with wind farms in the Dakotas and in the plains of Colorado.

We've got still more work to do to make college more affordable. We're going to have a lot more work to do to make sure that hard work pays off, which is why passing a minimum wage increase is so important, because there are a lot of families out there, even who have jobs, who are having a tough time each and every day.

And something that I know is near and dear to Tom and Kat's hearts and to Nancy's, we've got more work to do in terms of dealing with climate change and making sure that we've got an economy that is energy efficient, that is productive, that is cutting edge, and thinks about not just the energy sources of the past, but also the energy promise of the future.

And the thing that I'm going to have to try to work to persuade the American people a little more convincingly on is this notion that there's a contradiction between our economy and our environment is just a false choice, that if we invest now, we will create jobs, we will create entire new industries. Other countries will be looking to catch up; they will be looking to import what we do. We will set the standard, and everybody else will have to adapt.

But—and I mentioned this to Tom and Kat and a few folks right before I came out here—the politics of this are tough. Because if you haven't seen a raise in a decade; if your house is still \$25,000, \$30,000 underwater; if you're just happy that you've still got that factor job that is powered by cheap energy; if every time you go to fill up your old car because you can't afford to buy a new one and you certainly can't afford to buy a Prius, you're spending 40 bucks that you don't have, which means that you may not be able to save for retirement—you may be concerned about the temperature of the planet, but it's probably not rising to your number-one concern. And if people think, well, that's shortsighted, that's what happens when you're struggling to get by. You're thinking about what's right in front of you, which is how do I fill up my gas tank and how do I feed my family.

And so part of what we're going to have to do is to marry a genuine, passionate concern about middle class families and everybody who is trying to get into the middle class to show them that we're working just as hard for them as we are for our environmental agenda, and that we can bridge these things in a way that advances the causes of both. And that's going to take some work.

But the most important thing that it's going to take is people in Washington who are willing to speak truth to power, are willing to take some risks politically, are willing to get a

little bit out ahead of the curve—not two miles ahead of the curve, but just a little bit ahead of it. And that's why your presence here is so important.

Look, my intention here is to try to get as much done with the Republican Party over the next 2 years as I can, because we can't have perpetual campaigns. And so I mean what I say: I am looking to find areas of common ground with Republicans every single day. I want to make sure that we're working together to stabilize our finances. And I think actually that we can come up with a fiscal deal that instead of lurching from crisis to crisis every 3 months, we lay the groundwork for long-term growth, controlling our deficits, controlling our debt, but also making sure we can invest in our future. I want to get an immigration deal done. I want to find some commonsense gun safety legislation that we can get done. And I do believe that there are well-meaning Republicans out there who care about their kids just as passionately as we do.

Despite all the rhetoric on television, I actually believe that Americans have a lot more in common than our political rhetoric would give us credit for. But having said all that, I know Nancy Pelosi. I've seen her courage. I know that she is willing to do the right thing, even when it's not politically popular. And I want her once again as a fully empowered partner for us to be able to move our agenda forward.

And so I'm going to expect that you guys are fighting for issues, helping to move public opinion, engaging in organizing and engaging in advocacy and public policy work, all the stuff that—and I'm looking around this room, it's full of do-gooders here—all the stuff you do. But I also want to make sure that you are paying attention to what can we do to support the prospect of Nancy Pelosi being Speaker once again.

If we do that, then I'm confident that not only can we deliver on this profound issue of climate change, not only can we make sure that clean energy is the norm here in America, but I also think that we can give America that sense of confidence and forward movement that's always been our hallmark that characterizes who we are. To do that, I'm going to need you, and Nancy is going to need you.

And so I hope that this is not the end of your involvement. I hope it is the beginning. If, in fact, all the energy that's represented in this room is fully deployed, then I feel pretty good about Malia and Sasha, I feel pretty good about these young people right here. They're smarter than we are. If we hand off the kind of America that we should be handing off to them, I promise you they will take it to ever greater heights.

All right, thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at the residence of Thomas Steyer and Kathryn Taylor. In his remarks, he referred to James T. Fallon, Jr., host, NBC's "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon"; and Rep. Steve Israel, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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Names: Carlile, Brandi; Fallon, James T., Jr.; Honda, Michael M.; Huffman, Jared; Israel, Steve; Obama, Malia; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Pelosi, Nancy; Souza, Peter; Steyer, Thomas; Swalwell, Eric; Taylor, Kathryn.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; California : Democratic Party events; California : President's visit; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Congress : House of Representatives :: Minority leader; Democratic Party : Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : School improvement and renovation; Education : Standards and school accountability; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Infrastructure and grid improvements; Environment : Climate change ; Environment : Quality and improvement efforts; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Research and development; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Labor issues : Minimum wage; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

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